"The mighty dead
"Who blessed mankind and humanised the world."

THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN
AND
Record of Unitarian Worthies

BEING A HISTORY OF THE UNITARIAN REFORMATION OF RELIGION IN EUROPE AND AMERICA DURING THE LAST THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS.

With some Account of the most Notable Works written by Unitarians.

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IMMORTALITY.

Can we find a subject which presents so ample a field for thought as the future existence of man? It is a subject which has occupied the minds of the noblest and best of our race.

In all ages and among all nations the most learned and illustrious orators and divines have spoken with all their eloquence of the future life—of its blessings and enjoyments. They have described it as a vast spiritual empire, inhabited by millions of rational and intelligent beings, whose feelings and sympathies mingle in union, whose redeemed spirits join in one celestial choir around Him who sits upon the eternal throne. There no discords disturb their harmony; no pain or suffering interferes with their happiness; no grief or sorrow interrupts their joys; and no sin or transgression darkens the bright prospect that opens up before them.

Faith in this doctrine of Immortality is an important and vital element in the spiritual nature of man, and the better and the purer men are in their characters and lives, the clearer and the more satisfactory do their views of the future life become.

Alexander Pope said to one of his friends a short time previous to his death, "I am so certain of the soul's immortality, that I feel it within me as it were by inspiration."

We all, I think, at times have something of this feeling, this deep persuasion of the soul's immortality, this indwelling assurance of a higher and better life. This spiritual conviction of a future and more blissful existence is what Addison calls "the divinity within us."

Lord Byron had within his soul something of its inspiration, and it led him to say.

"I feel my immortality o'ersweep
All pains, all tears, all time, all fears, and peal
Like the eternal thunders of the deep
Into my ears this truth, Thou livest forever."

"That the soul is immortal," said Rev. Geo. Fox, a short time before his death, "I am fully convinced. The existence of a Deity is a proof that spirit exists, and why not then the spirit of man? And if such an essence as the soul exists, by its nature it may continue to exist forever. I should have believed in the immortality of the soul though Christianity had never been proclaimed."

We infer the immortality of man from the fact that he is competent to conceive of his own future and eternal being. As man is the only creature on earth aware of his own mortality and troubled with the fear of death, so he is the only creature capable of conceiving of any other state of existence. I consider this argument, simple as it may seem to the reader, perfectly conclusive. For the conceptions of all beings are limited by the actualities within their reach; to suppose an exception in the case before us is to argue against all the analogies of nature. Where, we ask, does the conception of immortality come from, if there is no blessed reality answering to it? Why is it implanted in our being? What sort of a creature must that be which can conceive of its own immortality and yet be liable at any moment to be put out of existence by a breath of noxious air?

Our argument is strengthened when we consider that this conception becomes an aspiration, a *desire*, the strongest wish of our nature, so dominant and all-controlling, that if it were made certain to us that our personal existence would ever cease, even though our annihilation were to be deferred for myriads of ages, the prospect of that future day when we should cease to be would turn every elevated pleasure into pain.

Now, we ask, what does this wish signify?

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Is it based upon nothing? Is it implanted in our minds only to keep us in order during the few years of our mortal life?

In implanting in us this longing after immortality is our Creator mocking us with a chimera? If so, let me believe that there is no God in the Universe, for it is better to have no opinion of God whatever, than to suppose Him to be the author of so stupendous a falsehood.

Our argument is still further strengthened by observing that a belief in man's immortality, in some form or other, is, and always has been, universal. It is an instinct of humanity, independent of argument, and going before education; neither the savage nor the child ever thinks of any final termination of his existence. Now there is nothing finite so infallible as instinct; and to suppose an instinct pointing toward a nonentity, is as absurd as to suppose a cause with out an effect. The philosopher who should pretend to discourse such an anomaly anywhere else in the kingdom of nature would be considered a fit subject for an insane asylum.

This intuitive belief in a future existence belongs, as I have intimated, to both civilised and uncivilised humanity. Valerius Maximus assures us that the Gauls were so confident of immortality that they frequently lent money to be paid in the future life.

Some of the Tartar tribes bury the best horse with the deceased person, in order that one may make use of it in the other world.

The Laplanders place a purse of money in the coffins of their deceased friends, that they may have wherewith to pay the porter at the gates of paradise; and the Hindoo widow believes that if she sacrifices herself upon the funeral pile of her husband, she will enjoy with him eternal felicity.

This belief in immortality is common to all, and having this faith within us, we say it cannot be that this earth is man's only abiding place. We feel that we are born for a nobler destiny than that which belongs to time. Our hopes and aspirations all point upward, and rest only in eternity. Our thought dwells not upon terrestrial things, but flows out into the infinite realms of the unknown.

No attribute of our being is satisfied with our present state of existence. Everything around us seems to be prophetic of a higher and a better life. The future is with us, and we cannot keep it from our thoughts. We believe in immortality, and we feel assured that there is a blessed *reality* answering to this faith which we entertain in common with the millions of our race. We can truly say with the poet,

"A voice within us speaks the startling word,
Man, thou shalt never die! Celestial voices
Hymn it around our souls. According harps
By angel fingers touched, as when the mild stars
Of morning sang together, sound forth still
The song of our great Immortality."

J. E. D.

THE DEPARTED FRIEND.

Not to the grave, not to the grave, my soul,
Descend to contemplate
The form that once was dear;
Feed not on thoughts so loathly horrible—
The spirit is not there
That kindled that dead eye,
That throbb'd in that cold heart,
That in that motionless hand
Has met thy friendly grasp;
The spirit is not there!

It is but lifeless, perishable flesh,
That moulders in the grave;
Earth, air, and water's minist'ring particles
Now to the elements
Resolved, their uses done!

Often together have we talk'd of death—
How sweet it were to see
All doubtful things made clear;
How sweet it were with powers
Such as the cherubim,
To view the depths of Heaven!

Oh, thou hast first
Begun the travel of eternity!
I gaze amid the stars
And think that thou art there.

Sure I have felt thy presence, thou hast given
A birth to holy thought,
Hast kept me from the world unstained and pure—
We did not err;
Our best affections here,
They are not like the toys of infancy—
The soul outgrows them not,
We do not cast them off;
Oh, if it could be so,
It were, indeed, a dreadful thing to die!

Not to the grave, not to the grave, my soul,
Follow thy friend beloved!
But in the lonely hour,
But in the evening walk,
Think that he companies thy solitude;
Think that he holds with thee
Mysterious intercourse;
And though remembrance wake a tear,
There will be joy in grief.

—*Robert Southey.*

THE BRIGHT SIDE OF HUMANITY.

THERE is something good in every heart; there is some redeeming trait in every character. No matter how vicious and criminal the life is; no matter how foul the stream of impurity is that flows from the lips; there is yet a secret spring of goodness in every human breast, that needs but to be touched by the power of kindness to be made to flow forth in streams of living holiness and purity. The poet is right in saying:

"In all there is an inner depth,
A hidden secret way;
Where through the windows of the soul,
God sends his smiling ray.

"In every human heart there is
A faithful sounding chord,
That may be struck unknown to us
By some sweet loving word.

"The wayward man in vain may try
His better thoughts to hide;
Some unexpected tone reveals
He has an angel side."

The individual may be coarse and mean in his dress; he may be rough in speech; he may wear a very unpromising exterior, but there is fine gold beneath that benevolence, and sympathy may bring it to light, to show that the man is not wholly corrupt and depraved. God, in His goodness, has placed a light in every man's being; the clouds and mists of error and sin may envelope it, and shut out its radiance from human observation, but still it is there, shining as bright as ever, and ready to burn with renewed brightness and beauty. This light, the wise man tells us, is the "candle of the Lord;" it is the divinity within us; it is the lamp that God has placed in the innermost recesses of our being; the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. It is a candle that burns with an ever-living, quenchless flame, unextinguished by the miasma of sin, unsmothered by the dark regalia of depravity and crime. How finely does the poet allude to this bright side of human character. He says:

"Oh, never yet upon the scroll
Of the sin-stained, but priceless soul,
Has heaven described despair!
Cast not the clouded gem away,
Quench not the living but dim ray,
My brother man, beware.

With that deep voice which from the skies
Forbade the Patriarch's sacrifice,
God's angel cries, forbear!"

There is no man who is utterly without virtue or goodness. Even in the most corrupt and abandoned of men there is something to approve, some good thoughts or worthy dispositions, some feelings of kindness or humanity. The moral edifice may be in ruins, but its shattered walls and broken columns tell of its grandeur and beauty. As I survey the darker phases of human character, and consider their vileness and depravity, I am filled with sadness and sorrow; but as I turn to look upon the bright side of humanity, I again become cheerful and hopeful concerning my race. Every sinful soul, like the dark cloud in the sky, has its bright side. I behold sin all around me, and where I do not see it I am prone to believe its existence; but I never meet an individual that sin has entirely robbed of his native purity and nobleness. There is no soul but retains some relic of its departed innocence, some spark of the celestial fire still glimmering in the ashes of worldliness, and never burning so low but that the wings of some good angel may reach it and fan it into a living and undying flame.

There is in every man an innate principle of right, a high and holy essence, which if reached by the force of reason or of feeling, is capable of being made subservient to good, no matter what the individual's sphere or condition of life may be, or the circumstances by which he may be surrounded. Let us then never despair of humanity, but labour for its amelioration. Let us never abandon a man to his vileness but seek to reform him. Let us never disparage the good that lies as a latent spark in every man's nature, but let us recognise its divinity and seek to build upon it, not by frowns and blows, but by the powers of sympathy and kindness, and let us seek to turn our wayward brothers from darkness to light, and from the powers of sin and Satan unto God.

"Wouldst win the crime-stained wanderer back
From vice's dark and hideous track,
Let not a frown thy brow deform,
'Twill add but fierceness to the storm;
Deal kindly—in that bosom dark
Still lingers virtue's glimmering spark;
Plead with him, 'tis the noblest part,
There's something good in every heart."

J. E. DAVENPORT.

LIGHT.

THE night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one.
Yet the light of the bright world dies
With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one,
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.

—F. W. Bourdillon, in Spectator.

WAYSIDE GATHERINGS.

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Practical Men.—Theoretical reformers and speculative clergymen who criticise existing organisations without mercy, and shun perplexing responsibilities which might put them on the defensive, should remember these words of the late John J. Tayler: "Men of action are constantly driven into practical inconsistencies."

Bond of Union in State Churches.—The *Westminster Review* mentions "the Romanist, the Calvinist, and the Unitarian parties" existing "within what professes to be one and the same church," and says that "the rank, wealth, and privilege which the establishment secures," constitute "the only bond of union between them."

Professor Maurice.—The late and truly respected Professor Maurice left the Church of his youth (Unitarian) and joined the popular and fashionable State Church. No one now need wonder that Matthew Arnold says of Maurice's theological writings "he passed his life beating the bush with deep emotion, and never starting the hare." What a wasted life thus to live on the question of all questions of great importance—*theological truth!* In fact, he left the fountain of living water and went to a broken cistern that could hold no water.

Wits Outwitted.—A clergyman who was travelling stopped at an hotel much frequented by wags and jokers. The host, not being used to having a clergyman at his table, looked at him with surprise; the guests used all their artillery of wit upon him without eliciting a remark. The clergyman ate his dinner quietly, apparently without observing the gibes and sneers of his neighbours. One of them, at last, in despair at his forbearance, said to him, "Well, I wonder at your patience. Have you not heard all that has been said to you?"—"Oh, yes; but I am used to it. Do you know who I am?"—"No, sir."—"Well, I will inform you. I am chaplain of a lunatic asylum; such remarks have no effect upon me."

Dr. Lathrop and Dancing.—A better story than the many told of West Springfield's eccentric parson, Rev. Dr. Lathrop, at the centennial gathering, recently, is told by Rev. Mr. Nightingale, of Groton. If it is not true, it is good enough to be, not only in itself, but in the telling. A young lady, who was a member of Dr. Lathrop's church, went on a visit to a neighbouring town, and while there attended a party and danced. Tidings of her sin reached home before her. On her return, she was visited and called to most severe account for the disgrace she had thus brought upon herself and upon the church, and which had been found out, notwithstanding it had been done among strangers. One staid maiden was specially earnest in her rebukes, and made the poor girl feel very bad. "What shall I do?" she asked. "You had better go and see Dr. Lathrop." She did go, and told him all about it. "And so, my dear, you went to the party and danced, did you?" she said. "Yes, sir." "And did you have a good time?" "Yes, sir." "Well, I am glad of it, and I hope you will go again and enjoy yourself. And now I want you to tell me the name of the woman who has been making you all this trouble." She told. "Go to that woman and tell her from me that, if she wants to go to heaven, she had better make more use of her feet and less of her tongue."

A Dying Wish.—Some one recently affirmed in America that Mrs. Collier, the late wife of the Rev. R. L. Collier, died a Methodist. Mr. Collier says:—Mrs. Collier died a Unitarian. The joy of her life was her religious change from Methodism to Unitarianism. The most sacred inspiration of my life to-day is her dying charge to go on in my work.

The Devil's Last Fort.—Satan's last fortification is religion. He has entrenched himself behind the churches. He sits at his ease, entirely defiant, like a god. And if you think me irreverent in treating this theme, I warn you in advance that I have little respect for demons and devils. As the physicians drove them out of medicine, and scientists drove them out of the elements of nature, so the clergy should drive them out of religion.

Saving Faith.—The faith that leads mankind to follow Christ is now more and more admitted by our Trinitarian brethren as the faith that saves. In reply to the question: "Is saving faith, faith in the divinity of Christ, or in Christ as a personal Saviour?" the *Christian Union* replies:—"Saving faith in Christ leads us to trust in Him as a personal Saviour, and to follow his example with all our hearts." To this answer we can take no exception. It requires no assent to mathematical impossibilities, and comes right at the meat of things.

Quiet and Noisy Heresy.—The *Christian Register* gives us this brevity on heresy:—In almost all the popular churches men can indulge quietly in heresies as much as they please. It is only when liberal ideas are proclaimed with such sturdy and uncompromising openness as to occasion a public commotion that ministers are interfered with by councils or bishops acting reluctantly in self-defence. When John Hancock's servant broke an elegant and costly ornament, the Governor said, "James, break as much as you please, but don't make such a confounded noise about it."

Christian Progress in India.—We quote the following from a report on Mission Work in India: "Between 1861 and 1871, the number of Christians has more than doubled in Bengal. In Central India, the native church has multiplied by nearly 400 per cent.; in Oude, by 175 per cent.; in the North-Western Provinces it has nearly doubled; in the Punjaub and Bombay, it has increased by 64 per cent.; and the total increase of all India is 61 per cent." We are inclined to believe that there never was a time when the prospects for Christianity were so bright there as at the present. The *Indian Mirror*, the paper of the Brahmo Somaj, recently said, "The spirit of Christ is conquering India."

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